

A: It wasn't an endangered species so much as it was protection of wildlife.

Q: Sure. Which of course you were mandated to do, to work at least with the other wildlife agencies.

In August 1951, you entered the National War College, and you've already mentioned that you really enjoyed your time there. Why were the courses there so valuable for you?

A: I think personally--first you've got to look at the makeup. The makeup was, there were a hundred students as I remember. And of that 100, about 10 were from the State Department; one from Commerce, at least one. Maybe, oh, the other military departments made up most of them. The Corps got two, the Infantry got three, or what have you. But to me, it's the kind of wide experience that an officer who's going to advance in the Army actually has to have.

I told you about the people who came to lecture us. We had Margaret Mead for instance give us two lectures. Well, that might sound a little bit peculiar, but anthropology is damn important in understanding why other nations don't feel and act like we do. And it's one of the main reasons why I feel that some of this silly stuff we do about imposing our way of life on other nations will never work, because they're not attuned to that sort of thing. For instance, Russia is a matriarchal sort of society whereas we're a macho sort of society here. I guess that's the wrong word. We had the Director of the FBI come up and talk to us. We had Allen Dulles come and talk to us. We had the great Israel diplomat.

Q: Ben Gurion?

A: No, not Ben Gurion. A big tall fellow. Very heavysset.

Q: Abba Eban?

A: Abba Eban. We had him come and talk to us. Other foreign people of equal prominence and people in the United States. And even a prime minister or two. And they were there under the strictest--we

will not say what they talked about or said--they leveled with us. And the reputation of the War College is such that they could be very free about what they said, even in the part of some of the U.S. people criticizing verbally members of Congress or other members of the department, or past Presidents, or what have you. We had lectures on world economics, and that's where I first learned that money is not money. It's a commodity like wheat and corn. Only the fact that we deal with dollars makes it any different than talking about wheat in bushels. Understanding that attitude in world economics to me is quite important.

After these lectures, we had very prominent professors at the War College. You'd divide the class up into three parts and the lecturer went to one and these others went to other groups. And you'd discuss what he said. We did two problems while we were there, which, to me, were not that important. Oh, I remember one I was concerned with was the defense of Europe or the invasion of Europe, I forget which. Anyhow, I felt we should invade through Greece rather than through France. We lost. I mean lost the argument. And the other one was to prepare a thesis on assigned subjects, and I had to prepare mine on nationalism in Latin America. I didn't even know what nationalism was in those days. I mean how it differed from love of nation, you know what I mean.

And these classes took place in the morning and every Monday you got a stack of reprints out of books you never would think of looking at. And you could read them or not read them. There were no tests of any kind. You were there because of dedication and interest in what was going on. As I say, it was the greatest educational experience I ever had. And the only thing that makes me feel badly is that it couldn't continue by having transcripts and stuff sent to us as postgraduates. I understand why they're not. The War College used to put out a book four times a year that had articles by people on various international projects. They don't do that any more for some reason, I don't know why. But very interesting things having to do with world situations and that sort of thing. But I enjoyed it to no end. In fact I don't know of any time in my career when I haven't

enjoyed what I was doing.

Q: That's nice to be able to say.

A: But I've been very lucky. I just happened to be available for Jimmy Stratton, who became chief of Civil Works after the war you know, to become District Engineer. I was on spot when Wheeler needed somebody to go to Alaska. I was on spot when Pick moved in and wanted me to be chief of Civil Works. I was on spot when the flood of '52 took place, and he wanted to replace the then Division Engineer, I was there ready to go. And the governor of the Panama Canal--when the time came, had sort of offended the Secretary of War, and Sturgis wanted me to go down there. I had been through the canal when I went to Nicaragua, it was the only time I'd ever seen it. And afterwards, instead of not being Chief hurting me, golly, it got me with Bob Moses, which was a five-year experience, and at that place I met Walt Disney. Wanted me in his organization. And how lucky can you be? Being on the proper spot at the proper time.

Q: Well, you're able to make use of those opportunities. I think that's important, too. Can we go back for a moment, General Potter, to when you were Assistant Chief of Engineers for Civil Works? You said you were in charge of some special projects. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

A: Well, I've already described the St. Lawrence Seaway, but one of the most interesting was being the representative of the Chief's office in the negotiations with Canada on the diversion and use of waters at the Niagara Falls. Everybody has long realized the potential of the Niagara Falls for the generation of power, and both Canada and ourselves did have generating plants at the falls, but it was felt that in fact a large amount of water was available for additional generation. It was necessary, however, to always consider that Niagara Falls is a world-renowned spectacle. It's a great national asset and in the old days everybody used to go there for their honeymoon, as you well know. And it was essential that if more water was going to be used for generation of power, that the falls would still be adequately covered by water to have the same look that they've always had.